

Measure Up

Spring 2008

Assessment news for middle school teachers



Facts About NAEP 2009

- Over 9,000 middle schools have been selected to participate in NAEP 2009.
- From January 26 to March 6, 2009, over 520,000 eighth-graders will take the NAEP assessment in reading, mathematics, or science.
- Over 6,000 NAEP staff will administer NAEP 2009 to students in grades 4, 8, and 12 nationwide.

2007 Writing Results Released

On April 3, 2008, the results of the NAEP 2007 writing assessment were released. Each student responded to 2 tasks intended to measure one of three purposes for writing: narrative, informative, or persuasive.

Examples of each purpose are provided in *The Nation's Report Card: Writing*. One of the narrative tasks presented students with a poem by William Carlos Williams, "This Is Just to Say." The poem explains that someone has eaten the plums in the refrigerator, which were being saved by someone else. Students are asked to respond to the following prompt: *Imagine that you have just come into your kitchen and that the poem below is a note left for you on the kitchen table. Who wrote the note? How do you feel? What do you do? Write a story about what happens next.* Nationally, 55 percent of eighth-graders received a score of "Sufficient" or higher on their responses to this writing task.

One of the informative tasks provided students with a letter from Rina, a student who is coming to a school in America for the first time and needs to know what a backpack is. Students are asked to respond to the following prompt: *Write a letter back to Rina. In your letter, include a clear description of a backpack and explain in detail what she should keep in it. Remember, the more information Rina has, the better prepared she'll be to start eighth grade.* Nationally, 67 percent of eighth-graders received a score of "Sufficient" or higher on their responses to this writing task.

The following prompt is one of the persuasive tasks given to students. *Imagine that one of your friends never wants to try anything new. Whether it is a question of what to eat, what to wear, what to do, what to read, or what to watch, your friend*

always chooses what is familiar—"the same old thing." Write a letter to your friend convincing him or her to try something new. Be sure to describe what your friend should try and explain why your friend would like it. Nationally, 65 percent of eighth-graders received a score of "Sufficient" or higher on their responses to this writing task.

The 2007 results can be compared to the writing assessments from 1998 and 2002.

At grade 8 in 2007:

- The average score was 3 points higher than in 2002 and 6 points higher than in 1998.
- The percentage of students performing at or above the *Basic* level increased from 85 percent in 2002 to 88 percent and was also higher than in 1998.
- The percentage of students performing at or above the *Proficient* level was higher than in 1998 but showed no significant change since 2002.
- The average scores increased since 2002 for White, Black, and Asian/Pacific Islander students.
- The 6-point increase in the average score for Black students from 2002 to 2007 contributed to a smaller gap between White and Black students than in both previous assessments.
- The performance of both female and male students showed overall improvement. Females continued to score, on average, 20 points higher than males.

Source: Salahu-Din, D., Persky, H., and Miller, J. (2008). *The Nation's Report Card: Writing 2007* (NCES 2008-468). National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C.



Released NAEP Items and Scoring Guides: Valuable Classroom Resources for Instruction

Released NAEP items can be a valuable instructional tool for teachers. After each assessment, NAEP releases some of the questions from the assessment. More than 2,000 questions are available at the NAEP Questions Center (<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/itmrls>).

In addition to reading, mathematics, and science questions, NAEP has also released questions for

civics, U.S. history and geography. Teachers can use the search feature for NAEP Questions at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/itmrls> to find hundreds of released NAEP questions that can be used for a variety of purposes.

Here is one example of a thought-provoking civics question that can be used as a springboard for classroom discussion or activities, or as a test question to assess an objective at the end of a lesson or unit.

Source: Foy, J. (2007). *NAEP Assessment Toolbox for Teachers: Easy-to-Use Classroom Activities Using Questions and Data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress*. Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, Juneau, Alaska.

Sample grade 8 civics question

Amanda and her friends have noticed these two problems in their neighborhood.

Problem 1: The garbage cans in the public park are overflowing.

Problem 2: Many younger children have trouble crossing the busy streets on their way home from school.

Tell one thing local government could do to help solve Problem 1.

Tell one thing local government could do to help solve Problem 2.

For more information about these and other released items, visit: <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/> and select "Sample Questions."

Scoring Guide

Complete

Response indicates a plausible long-term government solution to both Problem 1 and Problem 2.

Partial

Response indicates a plausible long-term government solution to Problem 1 or Problem 2.

Unacceptable

Response does not offer plausible things that local government could do to solve either problem (e.g., "Make it illegal to throw away garbage outside"; "make parents or teachers walk all young children home from school").

2006 National Performance Results:

Score	Percentage of Students
Complete	<div style="width: 40%;"></div> 40%
Partial	<div style="width: 49%;"></div> 49%
Unacceptable	<div style="width: 9%;"></div> 9%
Off task	0%
Omitted	<div style="width: 3%;"></div> 3%
	0 100

Note:

- These results are for public and nonpublic school students.
- Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Sample student responses

Complete:

Tell one thing local government could do to help solve Problem 1.

Get the garbage truck to come everyday.

Tell one thing local government could do to help solve Problem 2.

Build a sidewalk under the road.

Scorer's commentary

The response suggests something local government could do to solve each problem on a long-term basis.

Tell one thing local government could do to help solve Problem 1.

Give recycle bins to the public park.

Tell one thing local government could do to help solve Problem 2.

Hire a police man or someone to direct traffic.

Scorer's commentary

The response suggests reasonable ways the government can address the two problems: recycling and hiring a policeman (hiring "someone" would not be credited).

Partial:

Tell one thing local government could do to help solve Problem 1.

They could answer a yes to the letter of Amanda.

Tell one thing local government could do to help solve Problem 2.

They could post crossing guards to help the young children cross the streets

Scorer's commentary

The response receives credit for its solution to problem 2. The suggestion for problem 1 is confusing.

Tell one thing local government could do to help solve Problem 1.

They can get dump trucks to go get the trash.

Tell one thing local government could do to help solve Problem 2.

They can get a Caution sign for the children that's says "Caution children crossing street."

Scorer's commentary

The response receives credit for its suggested solution to problem 2. The solution to problem 1 is not credited because it fails to suggest a more frequent schedule of trash pick-ups than the one currently in force.

Unacceptable:

Tell one thing local government could do to help solve Problem 1.

Take better care of the parks.

Tell one thing local government could do to help solve Problem 2.

Be aware of the problem and fix it.

Scorer's commentary

The response receives a score of unacceptable because it fails to provide anything specific that local government can do to solve the problems.

Tell one thing local government could do to help solve Problem 1.

Burn all the trash.

Tell one thing local government could do to help solve Problem 2.

They could give it away burn in fireplaces.

Scorer's commentary

The response does not provide acceptable suggestions for either part. In the case of problem 1, burning the trash does not get at the immediate problem of overflowing garbage cans in the park; the garbage still needs to be hauled away before it can be burned. The suggestion for problem 2 has nothing to do with the street crossing issue.



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What is the Nation's Report Card™?

The Nation's Report Card™ informs the public about the academic achievement of elementary and secondary students in the United States. Report cards communicate the findings of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a continuing and nationally representative measure of achievement in various subjects over time.

For over three decades, NAEP assessments have been conducted periodically in reading, mathematics, science, writing, U.S. history, civics, geography, and other subjects. By collecting and reporting information on student performance for the nation, states, and selected urban districts, NAEP is an integral part of our nation's evaluation of the condition and progress of education. Only information related to academic achievement and relevant variables is collected. The privacy of individual students and their families is protected, and the identities of participating schools are not released.

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